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Smog settlement targets Southern California,

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A settlement reached Thursday between environmentalists and California air quality officials will force major cuts in smog-forming emissions and possibly outlaw the sale of diesel-powered buses, officials said.

Most of the smog reductions are expected to come from improved vapor-control nozzles on gasoline station pumps and reformulation of consumer products such as hair spray, which alone emits many tons of pollution statewide each day.

The new pollution control measures required under the agreement are expected to

reduce emissions in Southern California by 67 tons a day by 2010, progress needed for the nation's smoggiest region to achieve clean-air standards by the federal deadline.

"That's a huge chunk of pollution that stands between us and clean air," said Gail Ruderman Feuer, an attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council in Los Angeles, which led the legal battle.

Although the settlement is designed to accelerate the cleanup of smog in Los Angeles and the surrounding counties of Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino, the new anti-smog rules will apply statewide.

"These rules will certainly help Sacramento," said Jerry Martin, a spokesman for

the state Air Resources Board.

The settlement follows an October ruling by a Los Angeles federal judge that the air board and South Coast Air Quality Management District failed to enact many measures in a 1994 plan approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Natural Resources Defense Council along with the Coalition for Clean Air and Communities for Better Environment have settled with the EPA but are still pursuing claims against the South Coast district.

Under the settlement, the state air board promises to adopt pollution-control measures starting this year and continuing through full implementation by 2006.

applies statewide

One key measure proposed would make emission limits for diesel-powered school and transit buses so strict as to eliminate their sale in California, beginning this year, Ruderman Feuer said.

"This is a big deal," she said. "Our belief is that (Gov. Gray Davis') administration, when handed a strong measure to reduce diesel pollution, will do it."

In combination with rules adopted last fall cutting tailpipe exhaust from sport-utility vehicles, power boats and motorcycles, the measures vowed in the settlement are expected to account fully for the emission reductions promised in the 6-year-old state smog strategy plan, officials said.